

**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
31 OCTOBER 2024**

CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Chris McEwan, Economy Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -
Ian Williams, Chief Executive**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Scrutiny on progress towards the Council's net zero target.

Summary

2. Following Council elections in 2023, the Climate Emergency Declaration was re-affirmed, and the Council's carbon neutral target was brought forward to 2040. Further aims to increase engagement with residents and businesses were included with the intention of reducing wider borough emissions.
3. The Council's emission reduction trajectory has been amended to 40% reduction every five years. Council emissions for 2023/24 were 6,190 tonnes/CO₂. The emissions we report are made up of the energy use in council buildings; business mileage; fleet emissions, and streetlighting and signs. We do not currently measure emissions from our supply chain or from waste.
4. Our carbon emissions for 2023/24 have reduced by almost 53% compared to our baseline emissions of 2010/11.
5. In 2023, the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer was invited to take part in a project to develop guidance for local authorities to report to Defra on adaptation progress. We are taking part in a subsequent trial for local authorities to report to the Secretary of State under the Climate Change Act's Adaptation Reporting Power.
6. Of the 109 actions reporting at the end of 2023/24, 91 are on track and 5 have been completed (see Appendix A)

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that Council acknowledges the report.

Reason

8. The recommendation is supported by the increasing public pressure to act on climate change. We run the risk of significant damage to our reputation if we do not deliver on our stated commitment to dealing with the Council’s contribution to climate change.

Ian Williams
Chief Executive

Background Papers

No background papers were used in producing this report.

Margaret Enstone : Extension 6229

Council Plan	<p>This report reflects the Council Plan Core Principle in Tackling Climate Change.</p> <p>In turn, actions that we take for climate change impact on our Council priorities. For example, as we improve our council stock, we improve the quality of life for our residents, leading to better health outcomes, which in turns means fewer days of school (or work), improved educational attainment and better work opportunities.</p>
Addressing inequalities	<p>Climate change affects everyone, but it has a disproportionate impact on areas of deprivation. This report demonstrates how we are addressing our own carbon emissions and resilience, giving us the ability to demonstrate through good practice what other people can do themselves</p>
Tackling Climate Change	<p>The Council has recognised the need to consider the carbon impact of the decisions it makes. This report is a progress report of our journey to reducing our carbon emissions and adapting our services to the unavoidable effects of climate change.</p>
Efficient and effective use of resources	<p>Our approach to reducing emissions will mean that resources are used more efficiently.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>According to the WHO, climate change is the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century. This report is a progress report of our journey to becoming a carbon neutral council.</p>
S17 Crime and Disorder	<p>There is no expected impact on Crime and Disorder in Darlington.</p>
Wards Affected	<p>This report covers how the Council is addressing its own carbon emissions and resilience. It will not affect any particular ward.</p>
Groups Affected	<p>This report covers how the Council is addressing its own carbon emissions and resilience. It will not affect any particular group.</p>
Budget and Policy Framework	<p>This report does not recommend a change to the budget and policy framework</p>
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No

Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers
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MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

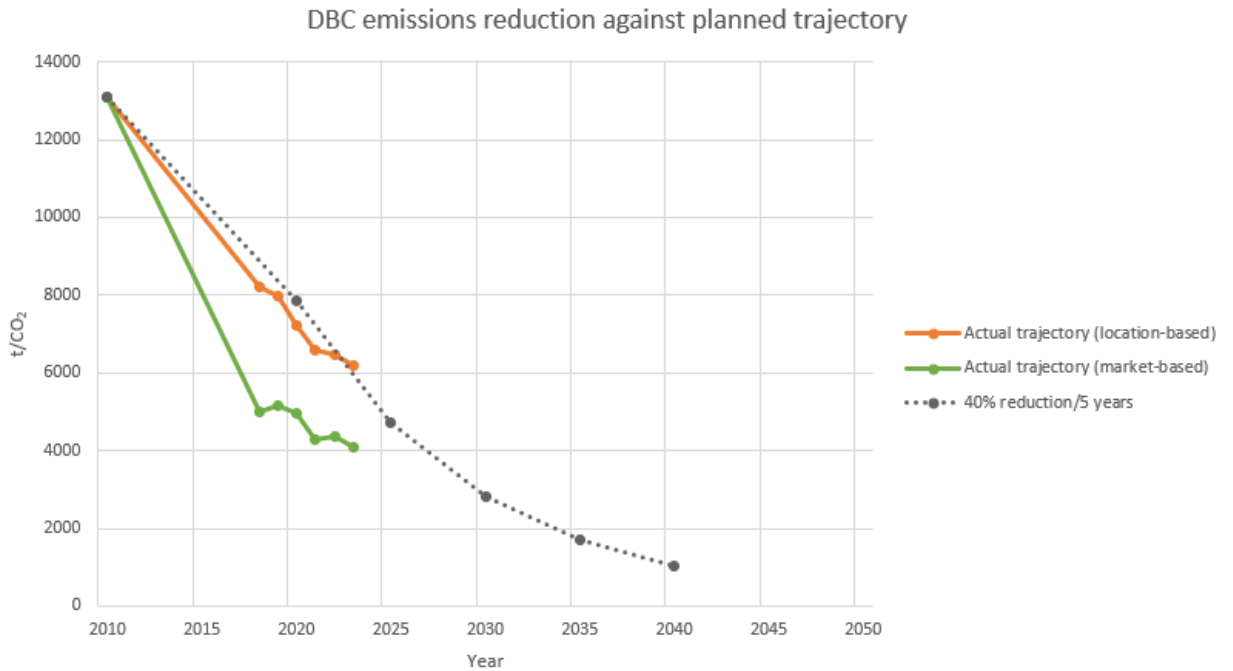
9. Following Council elections in 2023, the Climate Emergency Declaration was re-affirmed, and the Council's carbon neutral target was brought forward to 2040. Further aims to increase engagement with residents and businesses were included with the intention of reducing wider borough emissions. A further commitment to monitor the Council's supply chain emissions was also added.
10. A new Climate Change Officer was recruited and joined the Council in January 2024. His focus is internal, working with teams to develop new carbon reduction projects and guiding existing actions in the climate change action plan to fruition.
11. The Council's emission reduction trajectory has been amended to 40% reduction every five years. This trajectory will leave approximately 1000 tonnes of emissions to be offset. An offset strategy will be presented to Cabinet in October.
12. Emissions to date:

	2010/11	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	t/CO ₂	t/CO ₂	t/CO ₂	t/CO ₂	t/CO ₂	t/CO ₂	t/CO ₂
Streetlighting	3,487	759	596	515	458	412	418
Corporate Estate	7,564	5,928	5,907	5,014	4,864	4,709	4,579
Business Travel	2,050	1,509	1,482	1,426	1,270	1,328	1,192
Total estimated working from home emissions/tCO ₂ e during lockdown				125			
Total	13,101	8,196	7,985	7,080	6,592	6,449	6,190

13. Electricity generation from the solar panels on the roof of the Town Hall:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	Generation	Generation	Generation	Generation	Generation	Generation
	kWh*	kWh	kWh	kWh	kWh	kWh
Total	1,008	7,846	8,597	9,015	9,028	12,720

14. Trajectory:

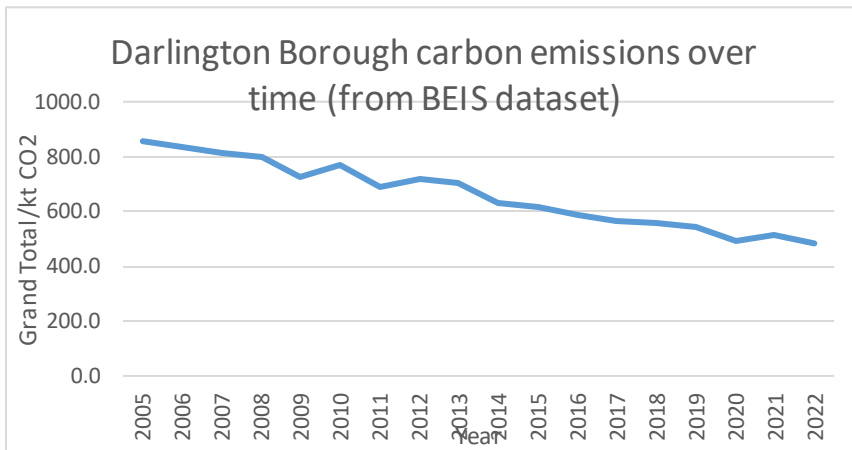


15. We report emissions as recommended by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and show both location-based emissions, which use the average grid emissions that reflect the energy that we are using and market-based emissions, which take into account the zero carbon tariff that we have chosen. The emissions we report are made up of the energy use in council buildings (not including council homes as we do not control how residents use the energy); business mileage; fleet emissions, and streetlighting and signs.
16. Reporting emissions from our supply chain is optional under the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and we do not currently measure these emissions. However, we have identified the suppliers within the highest carbon intensive industries and will be contacting them to find out what actions they are already taking to reduce their emissions.
17. Our carbon emissions for 2023/24 have gone down by almost 53% compared to our baseline emissions of 2010/11. Our emissions have lowered by 4% in 2023/24 from 2022/23.
18. Electricity consumption of streetlights has gone down by approximately 5%, saving 94,197 kWh and electricity consumption of council’s corporate estate has lowered by approximately 4%, saving 289,843 kWh in 2023/24 as compared to 2022/23.
19. In past years, we have benefitted from a favourable conversion factor, converting kWh of electricity to carbon emissions. However, 2023/24 saw a greater proportion of natural gas used to generate electricity, so our electricity emissions (using the average grid emissions) are higher than last year.
20. There has been a 10% decline in our emissions from Business Travel. This is mainly due to an ongoing trial of HVO in some of our corporate fleet which has reduced the diesel consumption in this year, hence lowering the carbon emissions.

- 21. A 6% decrease in the carbon emissions from gas consumption in the corporate estate has been observed. This may be due to the pool closure at the Dolphin Centre for maintenance work, so we will watch to see if this is a temporary drop.
- 22. In 2023, the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer was invited to take part in a project to develop guidance for local authorities to report to Defra on adaptation progress. This work has culminated in a trial for local authorities to report to the Secretary of State under the Climate Change Act's Adaptation Reporting Power.
- 23. The Sustainability and Climate Change Officer is working with teams to complete the required risk assessment, against risks identified by the Climate Change Committee. This risk assessment and report must be submitted to Defra by December 2024.

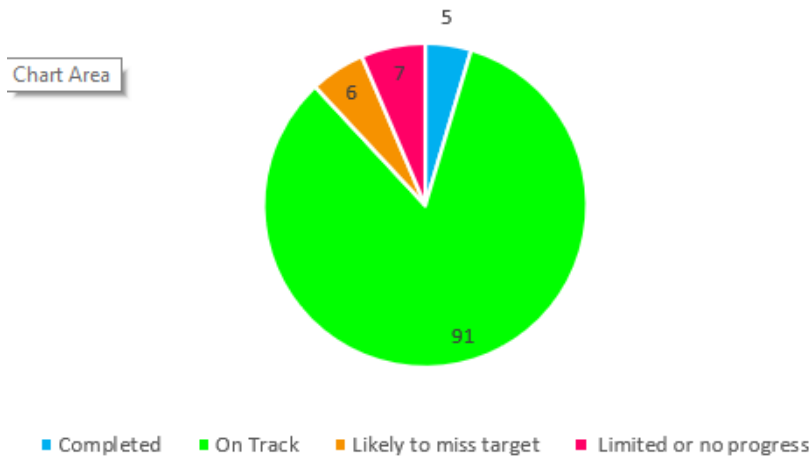
Borough wide emissions

- 24. We monitor Borough emissions using government published figures. These are two-years in arrears, so the latest data relates to 2022. These show that Darlington is on a par with both the north-east average and the England average.



Climate change action plan

25. The Climate Change Officer has collated information on progress of actions in the climate change action plan.
26. At March 2024, 91 actions were on track, with five completed (see Appendix A). Thirteen actions were either likely to miss the target or have no progress. This is mostly due to capacity issues, with actions for the Dolphin Centre waiting on external assessment.



27. Highlights include:

- (a) A trial project using hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) to replace diesel in six of our refuse vehicles. HVO is a direct replacement for diesel, requiring no adjustments to vehicles, but producing significantly lower CO₂ emissions. In 2023/24, 70,640 litres of HVO fuel were purchased, producing carbon emissions of 3 tonnes. If we had used diesel in these trucks, the emissions would have been 175 tonnes.
- (b) Around £3.3m of funding received across schemes for retrofit projects on council homes. Funding was matched with approximately £2.4m from the Housing Revenue Account. Further funding has been obtained through the Tees Valley Combined Authority to work with private landlords. Declarations have been provided for the government scheme ECO4FLEX for 178 properties.
- (c) Measures include:
- (i) Loft Insulation
 - (ii) Double Glazing
 - (iii) External Wall Insulation
 - (iv) Solar PV
 - (v) Cavity Wall Insulation
 - (vi) ASHP
 - (vii) Heating Controls
 - (viii) Low Energy Lighting
 - (ix) High Retention Storage Heaters
 - (x) Solar Thermal

- (d) Climate change adaptation has formally been incorporated in the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and as mentioned previously, a risk assessment of all services is underway.
- (e) The Housing Services Climate Change Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 9 January 2024.
- (f) A seed swap station was successfully set up in the Crown Street Library, enabling residents to pick up seeds for free.
- (g) We have been invited and are taking part in a government trial for reporting on our actions to adapt to climate change.

Climate change fund

- 28. £100k was allocated in the Medium-Term Financial Plan to help fund projects that will help us meet our target. All funds are now spent or committed.
- 29. This year, we have provided and committed funding to:
 - (a) Thermal imaging cameras to aid in maintaining council homes.
 - (b) Supported a schools' competition as part of Northumbria in Bloom.
 - (c) Provided carbon literacy training for a Climate Champion
 - (d) Supported the sustainability event held in June 2024.
 - (e) Cover the difference in cost between the usual diesel to fuel the refuse vehicles and the HVO for use in an extended trial.
 - (f) Funded a trial using solar panels on refuse trucks to reduce fuel use.
 - (g) Committed funding for an audit of the carbon sequestration potential of council land.

Communications

- 30. We have improved changed the name of the web pages from Sustainable Darlington to Climate Change and Sustainability. We have also moved it up the hierarchy so that it appears on the front page of the Council's website.
- 31. We continue to include a sustainability article in every One Darlington.
- 32. Our social media messaging across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn has reached more than 500,000.
- 33. Regular blogs are also published on the website.

Financial Implications

34. A reserve fund allowing savings from projects to be set aside for investment in climate projects has been set up.

Legal Implications

35. There are no legal implications, but with increasing public pressure to act on the threat of climate change, we must demonstrate how we will deliver on the motion commitments and protect the Council from future legal challenge.

HR Implications

36. The report does not affect the terms and conditions of any staff or change their duties.

Estates & Property Advice

37. The report does not affect the Council's land holdings or involve a lease, or license or any transfer or purchase of land.

Procurement Advice

38. The report does not involve any purchase over £100k

Equalities Considerations

39. Climate change affects everyone, but it has a disproportionate impact on areas of deprivation. By ensuring that the Council is resilient to the effects of climate change, we ensure that we will be able to continue providing services to all residents

Consultation

40. This report is a progress report for the Council's commitment to reducing its carbon emissions and increasing its resilience to the impacts of climate change. No public consultation has been carried out.